



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2018/28/2200
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	15 April 1988
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	3 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Confidential

PA  
West Belfast file  
+ + +  
53+

Mr. McLaughlin,  
for P. 3  
d

Meeting with Bishop Cahal Daly, 15 April 1988

Tim Corcoran and the undersigned visited Bishop Daly in Belfast on 15 April. Among the points made at the meeting by the Bishop are the following:

West Belfast

Bishop Daly was pleased with the recent attention which is obviously being paid to the economic problems of West Belfast, an area he described as the most economically deprived in Europe. He expressed his satisfaction at the Irish Government's efforts to convince the British Government to provide more employment for the area and he was very pleased to hear that the Government will try to include it as a major item at the next Intergovernmental Conference.

At the same time, Dr. Daly believes that Secretary of State King and Northern Ireland senior civil servants are willing to do something to help the area. However, he believes that public servants at "middle management" level continue to regard West Belfast as PIRA territory - "beyond the pale" - and will therefore do nothing to assist. He said he hoped all interested parties, including the church, would play their part in convincing the British Government to introduce a special industrial programme for West Belfast. The Bishop was emphatic that the present economic programmes which apply to the North will do little or nothing for West Belfast. These programmes, he said, do not even keep pace with the rate of job loss in the area. For this reason, Dr. Daly believes a special industrialisation programme must be drawn up for West Belfast, over and above the ordinary aids currently available to industry. To this end, he endorsed the call from the SDLP for up to £100m to be spent in the next 5 to 7 years in West Belfast. He pointed out that much more than this is being deployed in East Belfast.

Bishop Daly spoke about the areas of worst deprivation in West Belfast; Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge, Moyard Springhill. He said Divis also falls into this category and he was concerned that the planned demolition of the apartment blocks might now be postponed because of the cutbacks in the Housing Executive budget. He reminded us that £5m was deducted recently from the Housing Executive's "already inadequate budget". The possibility of this

postponement, he was told, is very real and he asked whether anything could be done to prevent it; the final demolition of the flats is vital in itself and postponement would represent a major psychological setback to the people in Divis. Dr. Daly admitted that most people in the aforementioned areas voted for Sinn Fein. However, he said there was also many people there who did not support the use of violence and he believes that no area in West Belfast should be considered "irretrievable".

He pointed to the West Belfast Enterprise Board (WBEB) as a worthwhile project. He had confidence in the people on the Board; they had all come from the area. He spoke of Fr. Wallace as a "very energetic" man who understood the problems and who had accomplished a great deal. While he had a personal interest in the WBEB, he would also support the West Belfast Phoenix Trust. However, he said he avoided making statements which would give direct support to any political party, and as the Phoenix project was known to be controlled by the SDLP, he had to be cautious about making public statements regarding it. The Bishop said he was aware that Dr. Alasdair McDonnell of the SDLP had put a lot of work into the Phoenix Trust. He said he would like to see co-operation between the WBEB and Phoenix but he would be totally opposed to the amalgamation of both projects. Bishop Daly said that nothing should be done to reduce the number of projects in West Belfast.

Dr. Daly exhibited some scepticism about the efforts made by the SDLP to win people away from Sinn Fein. He said that little or no work was being done by the local SDLP councillors in the area with the result that Sinn Fein had virtually no opposition there. Nonetheless, he said, Sinn Fein are not working very hard in the constituency either, despite their own claims to the contrary. He does not believe that Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein are unbeatable in West Belfast and he claimed that the present political position could be turned around if the SDLP were seen on the ground more often, meeting the people and providing advice. He considers Dr. Joe Hendron "a decent, well-meaning man" who will never win the Westminster seat in West Belfast simply because "he does not have enough charisma". Dr. Daly was also critical of John Hume for not showing an interest in Belfast, with the exception of "a few infrequent occasions". He blames Gerry Fitt for allowing Sinn Fein to take over there by running a personal fiefdom and not allowing the SDLP to establish itself as an organisation in the area.

RUC/Security in West Belfast

Bishop Daly emphasised that in order to bring about a normalisation of West Belfast it was most important to have the security forces in the area made more acceptable to the local population. He understood this would be hard to achieve as RUC officers answering calls for help from householders in the area have often walked into a trap set for them by the PIRA. However, the Bishop said that the security forces' current policy of regarding every resident in West Belfast as an enemy must cease. He partly blames the RUC Chief Constable Jack Hermon for allowing this to continue.

Hume/Adams Talks

Bishop Daly was concerned about the Adams/Hume meetings as he does not believe they will come to anything. Although SDLP supporters were unhappy with the initial decision to meet with Sinn Fein, most of them, he understood, are prepared to trust John Hume's judgement. He remains concerned that Hume may do himself and his party damage by the meetings and he personally finds it difficult to believe that Adams wants to end violence. The Bishop believes that Sinn Fein would not survive without it and that Adams' interest in the talks arises from the credibility gained for Sinn Fein and himself, not to mention the possibility of a negotiating place at any future conference table.

Unionists

He has noted a major change in Unionists' attitudes over the past two years. He believes this is primarily due to their realisation that the British Government will no longer guarantee their supremacy in the North. He cautioned that this new mood does not mean they will be any more compliant or willing to negotiate on our terms. It does, on the other hand, introduce possibilities which might be usefully taken up, Dr. Daly said.

  
Liam Canniffe,  
18 April 1988.

c.c. A/Sec. Gallagher, Counsellors A-I  
Secretariat, Box

3615p